

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -
Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

Sunday, June 6, 2010

USDA Agribusiness Trade Mission Kicks Off: From June 7-9, 18 U.S. businesses will hold over 250 introductory meetings with Iraqi importers in Baghdad. This is the first such trade mission to Iraq in over two decades. Iraqi imported over \$100 million in U.S. agricultural products in the first three months of 2010, mostly wheat and poultry. The Trade Mission also seeks to expand private trade to include critically needed agricultural inputs such as animal feed, seeds, and irrigation equipment. The four man USDA/Washington delegation to this event is headed by FAS Assistant Deputy Administrator Dan Berman. His blog will be posted June 8 on <http://www.usda.gov/blog/usda/>

New USDA Master's Degree Program For Iraqi Students Announced: USDA/Baghdad in conjunction with the Higher Committee for Education Development in Iraq (HCED), has announced a U.S. State Department – funded scholarship program that will allow up to 10 Iraqis study for a master's degree in agricultural economics, agribusiness or food and consumer economics at selected U.S. universities. This program is a long-term investment in the future of Iraqi agriculture. There will be a competitive selection process and applications for this scholarship will be accepted from June 6 to July 8 through the HCED site, www.hcediraq.org

PRT In Focus: Salah Ad Din: Since 2006, USDA has deployed Agricultural Advisors on the PRT Salah Ad Din province north of Baghdad. One successful PRT initiative was the formation of the Agricultural Task Force (ATF). The ATF consists of several key stakeholders in agriculture from different functional areas – Department of Agriculture, the Farmers Union, the Provincial Council, and the University of Tikrit College Of Agriculture. Working with this group, PRT Agricultural Advisors in Salah Ad Din have partners with the ATF on technical assistance projects for greenhouses, irrigation, no-till and other farming practices requested by local farmers.



Operation Little Yasser: Extension Services & Education - This week ePRT Baghdad North Ag team continued its work on “Operation Little Yasser”, which places greenhouse alongside a school in regions where high orphan populations are common. Yasser, as he's known, is a sweet, fragile child four year old orphan. The project will have three main effects; 1) School staff will use the structure for vocational training, essentially shaping agriculture for the next generation. Additionally, local MoA staff, as well as College of Agriculture staff, have both enthusiastically agreed to periodically visit the schools and instruct both students AND staff. 2) 50% of all produce harvested will be donated to the local families attending to that schools orphans, easing their burden. 3) The remaining 50% will be utilized by the school.



Personnel Update- There are currently 35 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, or embedded with U.S. military units. After 40 months in Iraq and 40 years of Government service, our Senior Policy Advisor Mike Neruda departs post June 15. After 16 months in Iraq, our much loved Soil & Water expert, Dr. Mike Gangwer, departs post Jun 11.

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